

Character List

Jay Gatsby (James Gatz)

Gatsby is, of course, both the novel's title character and its protagonist. Gatsby is a mysterious, fantastically wealthy young man. Every Saturday, his garish Gothic mansion in West Egg serves as the site of extravagant parties. Later in the novel, we learn that his real name is James Gatz; he was born in North Dakota to an impoverished farming family. While serving in the Army in World War I, Gatsby met Daisy Fay (now Daisy Buchanan) and fell passionately in love with her. He worked briefly for a millionaire, and became acquainted with the people and customs of high society. This, coupled with his love of Daisy, inspired Gatsby to devote his life to the acquisition of wealth.

Nick Carraway

The novel's narrator, Nick Carraway comes from a well-to-do Minnesota family. He travels to New York to learn the bond business; there, he becomes involved with both Gatsby and the Buchanans. Though he is honest, responsible, and fair-minded, Nick does share some of the flaws of the East Egg milieu. However, of all the novel's characters, he is the only one to recognize Gatsby's "greatness," - revealing himself as a young man of unusual sensitivity.

Daisy Buchanan

Daisy is Nick's cousin, Tom's wife, and the woman that Gatsby loves. She had promised to wait for Jay Gatsby until the end of the war, but after meeting Tom Buchanan and comparing his extreme wealth to Gatsby's poverty, she broke her promise. Daisy uses her frailty as an excuse for her extreme immaturity.

Tom Buchanan

A brutal, hulking man, Tom Buchanan is a former Yale football player who, like Daisy, comes from an immensely wealthy Midwestern family. His racism and sexism are symptomatic of his deep insecurity about his elevated social position. Tom is a vicious bully, physically menacing both his wife and his mistress. He is a thoroughgoing hypocrite as well: though he condemns his wife for her infidelity, he has no qualms about carrying on an affair himself.

Jordan Baker

Daisy's longtime friend, Jordan Baker is a professional golfer who cheated in order to win her first tournament. Jordan is extremely cynical, with a masculine, icy demeanor that Nick initially finds compelling. The two become briefly involved, but Jordan rejects him on the grounds that he is as corrupt and decadent as she is.

Myrtle Wilson

An earthy, vital, and voluptuous woman, Myrtle is desperate to improve her life. She shares a loveless marriage with George Wilson, a man who runs a shabby garage. She has been having a long-term affair with Tom Buchanan, and is very jealous of his wife, Daisy. After a fight with her husband, she runs out into the street and is hit and killed by Gatsby's car.

George B. Wilson

George is a listless, impoverished man whose only passion is his love for his wife, Myrtle. He is devastated by Myrtle's affair with Tom. After her death, the magnitude of his grief drives Wilson to murder Jay Gatsby before committing suicide himself.

Henry Gatz

Gatsby's father; his son's help is the only thing that saves him from poverty. Gatz tells Nick about his son's extravagant plans and dreams of self-improvement.

Meyer Wolfsheim

A notorious underworld figure, Wolfsheim is a business associate of Gatsby. He is deeply involved in organized crime, and even claims credit for fixing the 1919 World Series. His character, like Fitzgerald's view of the Roaring Twenties as a whole, is a curious mix of barbarism and refinement (his cuff links are made from human molars). After Gatsby's murder, however, Wolfsheim is one of the only people to express his grief or condolences; in contrast, the socially superior Buchanans fail to attend Gatsby's funeral.

Dan Cody

Dan is a somewhat coarse man who became immensely wealthy during the Gold Rush. He mentored Gatsby when he was a young man and gave him a taste of elite society. Though he left Gatsby a sum of money after his death, it was later seized by his ex-wife.

Michaelis

Wilson's neighbor; he attempts to console Wilson after Myrtle's death.

Catherine

Myrtle Wilson's sister. Tom, Myrtle, and Nick visit her and her neighbors, the McKees, in New York City.

The McKees

Catherine's neighbors. The couple is shallow and gossipy and concern themselves only with status and fashion.

Ewing Klipspringer

A shiftless freeloader who almost lives at Gatsby's mansion. Though he takes advantage of Gatsby's wealth and generosity, Klipspringer fails to attend his funeral.

Owl Eyes

An eccentric, bespectacled man whom Nick meets at one of Gatsby's parties. He is one of the few people to attend Gatsby's funeral.